

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Reply in response to the final Office Action mailed November 12, 2008. Before this Reply, claims 16-23 and 25-30 were pending, of which claims 16, 23, and 25 were independent. In this response, Applicants have canceled dependent claims 17 and 26 without prejudice or disclaimer. In addition, Applicants have amended each of the independent claims 16, 23, and 25 to incorporate the allowable subject matter that the Examiner identified in dependent claims 17 and 26. Finally, Applicants have amended dependent claims 18 and 27 to change their dependencies from the now-canceled dependent claims 17 and 26 to their respective independent claims 16 and 25. As a result of these amendments, claims 16, 18-23, 25, and 27-30 are currently pending, of which claims 16, 23, and 25 are independent.

In the final Office Action, the Examiner removed the drawings objections and claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 101, but maintained the pending rejections of claims 16, 21, 23, 25, and 29 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication 2004/0095887 ("Klincewicz") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication 2002/0186665 ("Chaffee") and U.S. Patent Application Publication 2002/0097716 ("Kumaran").¹ The Examiner also identified allowable subject matter in each of the non-rejected claims 17-20, 22, 26-28, and 30.

Although Applicants do not acquiesce in any of the pending Section 103 rejections, in this response Applicants have amended each of the independent claims

¹ The final Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the Applicants' disclosure, including the claims, and the related art. Regardless of whether any such statement is specifically addressed herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

16, 23, and 25 to recite at least the same allowable subject matter that the Examiner identified in now-canceled dependent claims 17 and 26. For at least this reason, Applicants submit that all of the pending claims are presently allowable over the art of record and the application is in condition for allowance.

The preceding remarks are based only on the arguments in the Office Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects of the invention that were not addressed by the Examiner in the Office Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding remarks in favor of patentability are advanced without prejudice to other possible bases of patentability.

Applicants respectfully request that this Reply After Final under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 16, 18-23, 25, and 27-30 in condition for allowance. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully point out that the final action by the Examiner presented some new arguments as to the application of the art against Applicants' invention. It is respectfully submitted that the entering of this Reply would allow Applicants to respond to the final rejections and place the application in condition for allowance. Finally, Applicants submit that the entry of the amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner continue to dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

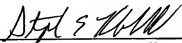
In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit that this claimed invention is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Reply, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the

pending claims. Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response
and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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